

THE LEISURE HOUR.

BREHOLD IN THESE WHAT LEISURE HOURS DEMAND,
AMUSEMENT AND TRUE KNOWLEDGE HAND IN HAND.—*Cooper.*



MRS. DEMARCAT AT LITTLE ORMBEY UNDER JOE'S GUIDANCE.

A YOUNG WIFE'S STORY.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE new-comer was the man with the smooth face, and, as far as my perception went, the cleverer of the two. Instead of removing his cap, he drew it more over his eyes, and bent his head. Supposing this last movement to be a rugged compliment offered me by the master of the cottage, I answered his civility by saying "Good evening."

No. 1315.—MARCH 10, 1877.

Without giving either of us time for further words, a voice proceeded from the saucepan: "This is Mrs. Demarcay, who wants my boy to show her a short way to Lorndale. She has been shut out at the gate yonder, and does not know how to get home."

Standing in the dusky light, his hat slouched over his eyes, which were studying me with an attention that, to say the least, was disconcerting, his clothes more shabby than poor, the man had such a repul-

PRICE ONE PENNY.

sive look about him that I kept silence, and involuntarily moved away as he came nearer, although by so doing I went farther from the door. It is at such moments that the ear, becoming more than usually acute, "trieth words," so that the slightest peculiarity of intonation is perceptible. Right or wrong, I fancied there was a little emphasis on my name, just sufficient to increase the mistrust which the new-comer's appearance had already deepened. If, as I now really feared, these people enjoyed no good repute, they would not be kindly disposed towards the relative of one by whom they had perhaps been punished.

"As your lad is not able to help me, I shall walk to Ormby by the sands. I am a good walker," was my next observation, taking a step towards the door, and stopping suddenly, the man having preceded me as I began speaking, and taken up his post upon the threshold. He had nothing now in his large, coarse hands, and as he stood, with one of them swaying to and fro, in the grey twilight, and his covered head sunk low upon his breast, a cold chill went to my heart. With the shades of evening deepening fast, every minute was of consequence, and yet I was obliged to linger. By remaining where he was, the man so filled up the narrow doorway that I could not pass without asking him to move, and that, apparently, he had no intention of doing. The position had all the appearance of having been deliberately chosen.

Within there was nothing really calculated to alarm me. One-half of the cottage was as neat as small tenements usually are. Plates were ranged on shelves, with jugs and cups hanging on nails underneath; a table and chairs were placed by one of the walls, and nets, with other fishing implements, were piled together near another; but, as the fire burnt brighter and the flames leaped up, the corners where the light did not reach seemed uncomfortably dingy. Involuntarily I went nearer the woman, as if she were my best protector. With her it would be well to make friends, as the walk to Ormby by myself might not be so practicable as I supposed.

"If your boy will conduct me to Lornedale he shall have this," said I, in a half-whisper, holding towards the blaze a sovereign I had managed to extract from my purse without exhibiting it, for which I thought myself rather clever.

Without desisting from her employment, or even looking up, she held out her hand for the money, dropped it coolly into her pocket, and called Joe.

"Take the lady to Ormby," she said, in a tone of authority, as the lad shuffled nearer; "you can do that;" and went on tasting and stirring what she was cooking, which really smelt good and savoury.

"Can I go by the sands?" I asked.

"If the tide is not in."

"Is it rising now?" was my next question.

"Fast."

The last word came from the man, who had left the entrance and was standing behind me, so close that mechanically I stepped aside with an expression of repugnance ill-concealed.

"Yes, Joe, take the lady to Ormby, and be sharp about it," he said, in a nasal voice, at once vulgar and so peculiar as to appear assumed. "Go by the short cut, and mind you take care of her."

Though the words were plain and simple enough to the ear, something in his tone jarred and made me uncomfortable. I was but little relieved when, drop-

ping into a chair, he turned from me as if my business were disposed of, and inquired if his supper were ready.

Glad, however, to get away, believing that any place would be better, and any company more congenial, than the present, I followed quickly, when Joe, needing no further bidding, gave a hitch to his ill-fitting clothes and shambled off to the door. The satisfaction of finding myself outside the cottage was not, however, to continue long undisturbed. Hardly had we gone many yards when a shrill whistle came through the air, at the sound of which my companion stopped, and, turning round, scampered back, leaving me to the ingenuity of my own imagination, which did not spare my nerves, assisted as it was by the lateness of the hour.

Near Ormby was a nest of fishermen, and though not recollecting positively anything against them, I knew that poachers and wild fellows were often brought before the bench. Where did they come from? Joe talked of man-traps and spring-guns, which, of course, were only placed where depredators were expected. If they existed in this neighbourhood there must be a cause. Notwithstanding the pile of netting on the floor, the inhabitants of the cottage did not look as if they belonged to the craft of fishermen. The woman's face I could not be said to have seen—purposely she seemed to have kept it turned away, and the man's, with none of the weather-beaten character of his class, had the sinister expression of an accomplished rogue. His proximity had sent a thrill of disgust through my veins when I found him so suddenly at my elbow, and now it was with genuine alarm that, on looking back, I saw him accompanying the boy in a lazy, sauntering way. What did he want with me, having already given his tacit assent to my departure?

As far as I could judge of time, my absence could not yet be generally known at home. Not finding herself summoned to dress me, Adams would naturally wonder what had become of her mistress, but not till the dinner-hour arrived was she likely to feel uneasiness or make any stir, and, even then, who would think of my having wandered down the cliff? My folly in supposing that a gate intended to keep out vagabonds—as I remembered hearing Colonel Demarcay say—could be opened by any secret spring discovered by chance, now appeared almost imbecility, and the delicacy which made me hide from Miss Everett and Demarcay Evans sheer nonsense. Yet, after all, what could happen to me? My name was a protection. Who would dare to hurt me? and what could they gain by it in a neighbourhood where each man was probably so well known as to have little hope of escaping detection and punishment? Was it not far more probable that I should be taken care of, since a service done to me would be certain to receive a reward?

If I did not quite believe my own reasoning, I endeavoured to do so, and pursued my way as fast as I could over the stones and unequal ground until joined by the boy whom they called Joe. He was then alone, and on coming up to me commenced walking at a rate which, notwithstanding all my eagerness to get away, made it difficult to keep up with him. By a question now and then, I got him to slacken his pace, and that was nearly all, for Joe, either from nature or prudence, being evidently no talker, little more than monosyllables could be obtained from him.

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"Is that your father?" I asked.

"No."

"That was your mother?" I next remarked, with little attention to grammar.

"Ees."

"Have you a father?" I next inquired, with an inward dread that the parent might be the darker-looking villain encountered on the rocks.

"Ees."

"Where is he?"

"Out with his boat, and won't be home before to-morrow night."

This was a long speech for my companion, and rather reassuring, though the voluntary communication was somewhat inconsistent with his previous taciturnity, because there remained a chance of the unknown parent being altogether a different man from the suspicious-looking individuals already seen.

"Would it not be shorter for me to go through Mr. Welch's property?" I asked, after a short silence.

"Catch a weazel asleep," answered Joe; "I know better than to go there."

"How far is Ormbey from Lorndale?"

"A goodish far by the road, but short enough by the other way."

"Can I walk it?"

"Ye can."

"What do you mean by a goodish far, a couple of miles?"

"Ees."

"More than a couple?"

"Ees."

"How much more?"

"A goodish far."

With regard to obtaining information, I was moving in a circle; my guide either could not or would not express himself more clearly.

"Can I get a conveyance at Ormbey?" I inquired, feeling small confidence in his estimate of my walking powers.

"May be."

"How far are you going to take me?"

"To the Hen and Chickens."

"Shall I get a fly or something of the sort there?"

"May be."

"May be," or something equally indefinite, was the irritating answer to most of my questions. The ragged Joe was diplomatic enough to avoid categorical replies when it suited his purpose. Finding that to be the case, I thought it useless to make further inquiries, and gave all my attention to the path, which, through the long grass and over the brown rocks, was not so clearly marked in the grey and purple dusk as where the white stones lay on the surface. After more than half an hour's walking, a light twinkled from below, near the shore, a true promise of better things, for in another five minutes other lights, scattered through the thickening gloom, gave me the joyful conviction that we had reached some inhabited place. Joe had not been a traitor, and, in my great satisfaction at being so near the end of my trouble, I resolved to recompense him well, thinking he would have no share of the coin pocketed by his mother.

"Is this Ormbey?" I asked.

"Little Ormbey."

"Shall I get any carriage here to take me to Lorndale?"

"P'raps."

"Do you leave me here, or can you take me to Great Ormbey, if I wish it?"

So pleased was I at arriving safely, that Joe appeared in the light of a friend. His sturdy "No" did not, however, disconcert me. By the glistening through the trees there were evidently several houses near, and amongst them all there was little doubt of my procuring aid.

"Here we are; have a care," said Joe, abruptly coming to a standstill by way of preparing me for a short and steep descent. The path ended, or rather dipped down, precipitately into another, considerably broader, yet not deserving the name of a road. We entered one at last, and stopped before a house that glimmered white in the duskiness of approaching night. Preceding me into a narrow passage, Joe, obviously quite at home, went straight towards some back premises which appeared occupied.

"Well, limb of mischief, what do you want here?" said a woman, coming from the lighted room into the narrow entrance where Joe had left me standing. Almost dark as it was, with all the light behind her, I could only distinguish that she was broad and short, and that she spoke in a cheery voice, more for her own amusement than in displeasure. A few words were exchanged in an undertone with my companion, and then diving back into the room she had just quitted, and taking thence a candle, crookedly set up so as to gutter considerably with the least movement, she came towards me with a profusion of words and apologies incoherently strung together.

"Mrs. Demarcay—too much honour—had she known—her humble roof—she was so proud. What can we do for you?" she said, curtsying; "our poor house is not for such as you, but we will do the best we can; we can give a good bed and clean linen, and—"

"I shall not trouble you for so much as that," I answered, quickly, though with a sinking of the heart difficult to control. "I only want to be taken to Lorndale; and a little tea, if you please," added I, feeling that something must be ordered for the good of the house.

"Yes, ma'am, of course, ma'am; will you kindly step in here?"

Opening a door I had already passed in approaching her, she ushered me into a room smelling of tobacco, where were a large table and some high-backed chairs, with a floor that looked as if it had little acquaintance with soap and water. Setting down the solitary candle, she left me and went back to Joe. Returning after an interval of about a quarter of an hour, which restless excitement compelled me to spend walking up and down the narrow dirty space in a state of unenviable impatience, she asked me to follow her into another room, which she said would be better suited to Mrs. Demarcay. I did so without suspicion. What could be more natural than that she should provide me with the best accommodation her house afforded.

Conducting me up a short of flight of stairs, she introduced me into a small bedroom, which, if homely, looked clean, and drawing forward an old-fashioned chair of a width capable of containing two like myself, invited me to rest while the tea was preparing.

"Will you first inquire about a vehicle to take me to Lorndale? I can drink my tea while they are getting it ready; I am not particular what it is."

"Surely, ma'am, surely," was the ready answer, as she waddled out of the room, leaving me alone, and thankful to be where I experienced neither mistrust nor uneasiness. Her appearance impressed me favourably. Besides a soft and pleasant voice, she showed considerable alacrity in complying with my wishes. Good-nature seems the special characteristic of stout people; they so evidently take life easy themselves that one is not quick to suspect them of making it hard or thorny for others. A few minutes after the landlady left me I bethought myself of Joe's reward, and putting my hand into my pocket was surprised to find my purse gone. It was there when I was in his mother's cottage; who had taken it, himself or the strange man? Remembering having found the latter unexpectedly near me just after giving the piece of gold, my suspicions fell upon him. It, however, struck me as noteworthy that the lad had not asked for anything, and had completely disappeared, for time went on, half an hour at least, and neither sight nor sound of any one reached me. Was my friend Joe, if not an accomplice, cognisant of the theft? Appearances were against him.

The solitary candle cast a poor flickering light over one side of the room, and that was all. Taking it from the table when my patience was exhausted, I made the circuit of the chamber in search of a bell-rope, which, when discovered, I pulled hard two or three times before it was answered. A tidy-looking girl, slim and smiling, appeared at last, with a tray furnished with a cup and saucer, a large metal teapot, large enough to supply a whole family, half a loaf of bread, and some honey, which she put down before me with many excuses that there was no butter fresh enough to offer the lady of Lorndale.

"Never mind the butter, I do not wish for any," I tried to answer, graciously. "When will the conveyance be here?"

"Presently; missus has sent for one."

After expressing a hope that the tea would be to my mind, she left me, and saying that the door was difficult to shut, closed it with a bang that hurt my already excited nerves, leaving me again alone.

Though the tea was not prepared in an appetising manner, I tasted it, being tired and thirsty. Few, if any, of the leaves had come from China; it might have been a decoction of simple herbs, and an innocent beverage in itself, but it was too bitter to drink. Once putting it to my lips was enough. Leaving the table, I went to the window and opened it, but could not undo the solid wooden shutters outside. No apparent fastening secured them, and yet they were so closed as to defy all my efforts to open. On examining them carefully by the aid of my feeble light, there was no better success. As far as I could discern, no bolt nor spring was visible. This was a chance circumstance, a mere chance, I told myself again and again after every fresh inspection; it could not be possible that Mrs. Demarcay was to be kept here against her will. My next proceeding was to try the door; it was locked or fastened in such a manner that I was unable to open it. Now, indeed, there was no longer any doubt, however strange and improbable, I was a prisoner, and, almost simultaneously with the suspicion, flashed upon me the motive of the detention, as well as an explanation of what I had seen on the cliff—the men with their bags, the uneasiness my presence had caused, and the way in which I was now disposed of. The two

men who had disappeared round the corner beyond the lane were burglars, and Miss Everett's house was to be attacked this night. Hence my ungracious reception at the cottage, and my present forced detention, lest my appearance at Lorndale, with such facts as I had to relate, should defeat their purpose. No longer believing in the landlady's promise to procure me the means of returning home, I became profoundly uneasy, and my confidence in her good-nature vanished. She had lent herself to the plot formed against my liberty. Undoubtedly I was to be kept in her house for the night, and Joe's whispered words had brought her a recommendation or order to that effect. This explained why he had asked for no reward, unless, what was also equally probable, he knew that the power to bestow one had been taken from me.

Safe myself from harm—at least, I believed so—it fretted and chafed me to be unable to assist my friend. With only women servants about her, what might not happen to Ivy Cottage and its mistress while I remained incarcerated here for the night? Fears for her, which every moment grew stronger now that this idea became more fixed, stirred up all my energies. Miss Everett must be helped; something must be done to save her from the impending attack. Feeling that only calm reflection could help me in such a moment as this, I sat down and tried to reason over the circumstances. Attempts at house-breaking usually take place after midnight; what o'clock was it now? My watch had been left at home, but, calculating the time lost before going to the cottage, the waiting there, the walk, and what had elapsed since I was brought to this place, it could not be earlier than nine o'clock. Ormby was not a long drive from Lorndale; if I could only get out of my present prison the distance might surely be walked in a couple of hours. But where was I? Joe had talked of Little Ormby, which I had never heard of before. Again I endeavoured to open the shutters, but without success. Through two or three horizontal bars in the middle the evening air came in, sweet and soft, with a pleasant sea fragrance that was refreshing, but I could not see through them nor gather an idea of the situation of the house. Another survey of the room brought me no hope from any other quarter. Determined to make one more effort to regain my liberty, and thinking it might be effected perhaps by clamour and perseverance, I pulled the bell several times. When the noise ceased, footsteps approached, and a voice called outside the door, "What is wanted, please, ma'am?"

"I wish to speak to your mistress."

Another long waiting succeeded, and then came the heavy shuffling steps of a person loosely slipped. The door opened after some fumbling at the lock, and the landlady entered, all smiles, anticipating my questions with a long, disjointed apology—she could get nothing; she was very sorry, her house was not the place for me, but perhaps I would condescend to put up with it for a few hours; she had done her best, she had even sent to borrow a neighbour's donkey-cart but it was not at home. To-morrow morning she thought it might be had, as early as I liked; and she was so sorry she could get me nothing to-night.

"But send to Ormby; surely there is something to be had there; you cannot doubt your messenger being rewarded for his trouble—handsomely rewarded," I added, with eager emphasis.

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"Oh, rewarded, ma'am! I should not be thinking of that if I could help you as you wish, but my husband being out, I have no one to send so far. It is a good three mile and more away. Sending there and back, ma'am, knocking them up, perhaps, and getting ready, it would be late into the night, ma'am, before you could start, and very late when you arrived at Lorndale, if even we got any one to go. I think, indeed, ma'am, that your best plan is to be patient until morning."

Though greatly fearing it would come to that, I made one effort more to attain my end. "Will Joe go to Ormbey for me? I will make it worth his while."

"Joe, ma'am? Joe is gone home, and I have really no one to send; my girl went among the neighbours here to borrow a cart, but did not succeed; I could not send her to Ormbey this time of night."

"What o'clock is it?"

"Past ten."

To me it was not late, but seeing plainly that nothing would be gained by arguing a case already decided, I left the subject.

"Will you be so good as to open the shutters? I feel sick for want of air."

With some difficulty she did so, and then placidly asked if I wanted anything besides.

"Yes, I beg of you not to allow any one to fasten the door outside."

"Of course not, ma'am; who ever thought of such a thing!" she exclaimed, with an injured air. "The locks are old, and the doors are so often banged and ill-treated that they are terribly out of order. Be sure, ma'am, that no one would take such a liberty as to fasten your door outside. See here, ma'am; take a firm hold of the handle and turn it so—gently," she said, suiting the action to the word, and looking so innocently, unconscious of meriting blame, that I began to wonder if I had made a mistake, deceived by my own fears.

"It will lock on the inside, I hope?"

"Surely, or if there is any difficulty, you can fasten it so," and, closing it directly, she drew the bolt triumphantly before my eyes.

As I showed no further dissatisfaction, she left me with an obsequious curtsy, murmuring in a soft, oily tone something of ill-deserving such an honour for her house.

The next few minutes were not idly spent. Though seeing no means of getting away except on my own feet, the waiting quietly till morning was not to be thought of; I supposed it possible to walk the distance if allowed to go my way like any other traveller and unmolested. Before I had decided what to do, a loud clang, like the sharp closing of a large door, echoed through the passage; they were evidently shutting up for the night, and my hope of escape was frustrated. Notwithstanding the plausible manner and explanations of the landlady, the suspicion of being forcibly detained now became stronger and stronger. If it were so, and any mode of egress through the window were practicable, that would of course be well watched. Indeed, once a sound like a suppressed cough seemed to rise from beneath. Was it not hopeless to turn my thoughts in that direction? Leaning over the sill, I looked down on what appeared a road, and, by reaching my head out more, distinguished a few lights in some upper chambers at a short distance. If this were the hamlet of Little Ormbey, Great Ormbey must be in that direction.

and was not much more than three miles off. Why should I hesitate? a clergyman, a doctor, besides other respectable people, must live there. Why should I not go downstairs boldly and state my determination to proceed thither, trusting to one of them to send me on to Lorndale? Would this soft-tongued woman dare to prevent me from going? or—and the new idea staggered me not a little—would anything happen on the road? My short residence at Lorndale, my total ignorance of the country around and of the neighbourhood, except of a few families who had called soon after my marriage, made me somewhat uncertain in my decision how to act. These people at the Hen and Chickens might be honest and acting in all good faith towards me, or they might not. This part of the County was lonely, and had few gentlefolks among its inhabitants. Colonel Demarcay's property appeared about the boundary of civilisation, as all visitors whose calls we returned seemed to live in an opposite direction. Perhaps, known in these parts chiefly in his magisterial capacity, and probably not liked, his name might not be the tower of strength I imagined. That external suavity of manner which so distinguished him was not uniform; he could lay it aside when he chose; he could be harsh when offended, and was never much liked by his servants. Hard, also, he often was upon the boyish tricks and follies of Hubert; hard, I feared, upon the poor—except in the matter of giving alms, which he did generously—I may add, loftily. Such a man could not be popular enough for his reputation to benefit me. On the other hand, he was rich, he was powerful; not one to suffer himself or any one belonging to him to be hurt or insulted with impunity.

With the exception of the loss of my purse, I had sustained no inconvenience but what I had brought on my myself. Perhaps it might be wiser to wait where I was until morning; the room was habitable and the bed looked clean. I began to think it would be best to lie down in my clothes and obtain such rest as was possible under the circumstances, and should have decided to do so, though reluctantly, but for a trifle which at that moment caught my attention.

AUSTRALIA FELIX: IMPRESSIONS OF VICTORIA.

BY ISABELLA L. BIRD

III.

RISING early one morning in the beautiful Australian spring, with my nerves in a state of singular irritation, I saw that a curious change had passed over the earth in the night. The bright, turquoise blue of the sky had changed to a fiery red, a red-yellow light lay along the horizon, not a leaf stirred nor bird sang, and the rasping din of the vociferous tree-cricket was only to be heard in bursts at long intervals, and soon ceased altogether. The needles of the Norfolk Island pine still asserted their rigidity, but all other vegetation was limp; the grass was dewless; even the glossy leaves of the ficus hung down sadly. The air was hot, heavy, breathless, and the sun fierce and red. About noon the trees began to creak, then there was a rustle of foliage, a whirling of dust, and a slamming of doors,

and people ran about shutting windows. As the wind rose the mercury rose, and 80° and 85° were quickly passed. In the afternoon it stood at 90°, but fell to 81° after sunset.

The night passed slowly; it was hot, still, and airless. The next morning the sun rose fierce and red, and a fiery fog took the place of the sky. All day long the north wind blew with a blasting breath, and the mercury hovered about 90°, and still the crickets were silent and the birds songless. Swarms of black flies, juicy and lazy, settled on everything indoors. The sunset was gory and coppery; the wind fell, and the trees sighed themselves uneasily to rest. Another night of heavy heat, with the mercury at 83°, passed wearily, and the third day of the hot wind was ushered in by an airless dawn. Till the late afternoon a fiery sun blazed from a fiery sky, burning up the earth not yet cooled from the glare of the day before. Respiration became quick and painful; the air was as if deprived of oxygen; it reminded me of that which surrounds the "puddling furnaces" in the Consett iron-works. The mercury stood at 96°; the young fruit shrivelled; leaves hung like rags, limp, and scorched at their edges; the grass was tawny, and threw off a yellow glare; roses shed their petals, and fresh-blown flowers wilted on their stalks; the fiery air was dark with clouds of fine dust; cattle stood under the trees, expectantly, with dull eyes and flabby lips, or roamed over the parched grass, bellowing; dogs were restless, and fled to and fro with limp tails and protruding tongues; the heat in the closed and darkened rooms was stifling and intolerable; everything looked as if nature, animate and inanimate, were at its last gasp, when, suddenly, the brownish-red sky became blue, then dappled with clouds, and, before a strong south wind fresh from the Antarctic Ocean, the mercury went rattling down 46 degrees in two hours. Man and beast revived, windows were thrown open, and before dark we were shivering by a roaring wood fire. That night torrents of rain fell, and the next morning nature was green and crisp, though the tawny grass would not recover itself till the following winter.

But my Victorian friends protested against my calling this performance, which was repeated three times in twenty-five days, a "hot wind." It was only a "warm wind," they said, and they pointed triumphantly to the incontestable figures of the Government statist, according to whom the hot winds only blow on an average fourteen days in the year. "Wait," said they, "till after Christmas, and we will show you what a real hot wind is." But I did not wait, and if the "hot wind" be truly worse than the "warm wind," I am content to remain in ignorance of it for evermore.

The Victorians have developed a singular national sensitiveness, and a stranger soon learns that it is wisest to be reticent in his remarks on some salient peculiarities. If one looks listless during a hot wind—and everybody does look listless—one is politely made aware of "the terrible east winds of England." If one utters a suppressed "Oh!" on being jolted almost to death over a bush road, one's imagined criticisms are forestalled by such a remark as, "You mustn't expect macadamised roads in such a new country;" and if, when half-choked, one ventures to turn one's back on the wind during a dust-storm, one is supposed to be instituting invidious comparisons, and is treated accordingly.

At this safe distance, however, I venture to remark that our kinsmen show a singular perversity in their mode of housing and dressing themselves, adhering with an illogical but touching tenacity to the traditions of "home." The wide streets of their cities, usually shadeless and without verandahs, are utterly out of place in a country without a winter, and whose long summer is a hot, bright blaze. In most town houses—and, indeed, in many country ones—there is literally no protection against heat except the unwholesome one of German shutters, painted green. Few things dismayed me so much as the darkness in which the colonists live, partly, they say, because of the plague of flies which the light brings with it. On going into a drawing-room from the daylight one stumbles over chairs and footstools, and the faces of friends cannot be recognised for the first two or three minutes. The gloom and stuffiness are depressing, and very bad for the eyes. Then the railway cars, instead of being long and airy, are small and close, and one is smothered by the mere look of their much-stuffed, dark, cloth sides, and cushions full of dust. Men recognise the heat by pugreases, quilted cotton helmets with slouches like sou'-westers behind, and linen or buff alpaca coats; but the ladies dress much as at home, and have nothing of the cool, fresh appearance which American women produce by their tasteful muslins and other diaphanous materials. Everything is penetrated within a week by fine dust, and silks and all materials which do not wash look shabby in a fortnight. Shadeless skies, shadeless houses, glaring roadways, dusty sidewalks, swept by the dusty trains of ladies, everything unveiled, unshadowed, unpicturesque, make one long, on a hot day in an Australian town, for the cool, many-balconied, narrow streets of Valencia or Malaga, and even for the shade of Paternoster Row or King Street, Cheapside.

Still, the Victorian heat, from its extreme dryness, is not unwholesome, and, except in a hot wind, 90° is a less uncomfortable temperature than 74° in Argyleshire or Florida. As may be expected, our race, reared on fog and damp, is undergoing a change in the stimulating climate of Australia; and the type of the new nation of the future is to be sought for in the tall, slight, early-matured native-born youth, the girls bright and delicate-looking, without being sickly, and the boys active and wiry without being broad or robust, feline rather than leonine. Men who went out as lads, ten or twenty years ago, and have lived out-of-door lives, eating much meat and drinking little alcohol, have a superb *physique*, and for healthy men, going out to healthy agricultural pursuits, there is not a finer climate in the world than that of Victoria. The eating of much meat, and thriving upon it, is characteristic of the colonists, and just now, though beef is eightpence per pound in Melbourne, it is only threepence and fourpence "up the country," and a whole sheep can be bought for ten shillings. Even in the cities meat is eaten heartily three times a day, and in the bush a robust man eats half a pound of solid flesh at each meal, the stimulating climate rendering this amount of animal food both agreeable and digestible. The quantity of meat put upon the tables of people even of moderate means is amazing, and, at first, almost revolting. Flesh is used lavishly; only the best joints are to be seen ordinarily, and in the country much is thrown to dogs and hogs. Abundance is characteristic of colonial living to such an extent, that since I came home an

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ordinary meal has suggested to me poverty or scarcity—"short allowance," in fact. Go wherever you will, in Victoria, from the rich "squatter," whose cattle and sheep are numbered by tens and hundreds of thousands, to the humble home of the shepherd or artisan, and the Old Testament blessing of plenty is found, "bread enough and to spare," and the poorest of our brethren is able to exercise "free-hearted hospitality," and to say to friend and stranger, "Drop in to dinner whenever you pass."

To see all this in perfection, and many other things besides, it is necessary to leave Melbourne, with its city conventionalities and residuary population, and go "up the country." The delights of "up country" are manifold; the climate improves, to my thinking, with every ten miles of distance from the sea-board; life is, or may be, sensible and untrammelled, and the true colonial character, with its self-reliant, hearty, hopeful spirit, is to be seen in perfection. I was sorry to leave the beautiful suburbs of Melbourne, and the kind friends who had made them home to me, even though a night of choking "warm" wind had been followed by a "southerly burster," and it was blowing half a gale when we reached the quay on the banks of the Yarra, where the Warrnambool steamer lay. The best boat was laid up for repairs, and the one which was "on" was the very worst passenger steamer which at that time I had seen—very dirty, and cumbered rather than loaded with every description of cargo. The captain said it was too stormy to sail; we should not be able to cross the Warrnambool bar; and even if we could, the open boats in which people are landed would be swamped by the surf. "Maybe it'll moderate to-morrow," he added. So about sixty passengers returned, crestfallen, to their different homes. In the afternoon there was a "dust-storm." It never came quite up to us, but for two hours darkened the air, shutting out of sight the near ranges, as with a heavy brown fog, and on the way back to Brighton we were smothered in fine brown dust—hair, ears, eyes, nose, mouth, and clothing being all penetrated by it. The roadsides and commons, which had been green, looked as if a fiery breath had breathed on them, and the gum-trees and she-oaks were greyer and uglier than ever.

The weather did moderate during the night, and it was cool and brilliant when we reached the quay early the next morning, one of those splendid days by which the memories of hot winds and dust-storms are obliterated. Shippers had taken advantage of the detention, and had piled more cargo upon the steamer, so that she looked both grotesque and unsafe. I scarcely ventured to make a remark, but the fine old colonist who accompanied me felt it necessary to extenuate the state of matters, and became eloquent upon the overloading, as being significant of the commercial activity of Victoria. The holds were choke-full, and the whole deck was piled, not only up to the top of the bulwarks, but considerably above it, with chests, planks, chairs, orange-boxes, and empty hen-coops. When the last apparently vacant space was disposed of, a waggonette was lowered upon the top of a double tier of chimney-pots and lashed there; and finally, a horse in a box was wedged in amongst the luggage, with his head filling up most of the saloon doorway. Then the front of the very small bridge was heaped up with orange-boxes, and still shippers on the quay were clamorous for more room. Loud remonstrances were made, however, and people

shouted from the quay that the load-line was submerged eight inches, and that she would go down headforemost in a heavy sea; so the captain cast off the hawsers. There was not standing-room on the bridge for half the passengers, and the fierce sun soon drove all but well-seasoned skulls into the small dark saloon, which was lumbered with portmanteaus, bags, and bundles, and crowded with people clamouring for berths, ninety-five having to be stowed away somewhere where there was but scant accommodation for thirty-five. I sat on a bundle on the floor, wondering all the time at the singular types of ugliness which abounded. Most of the passengers were Scotch, so whisky flowed freely, and "noblerising" was carried on nearly the whole day and night with great vigour. At meals there was rude abundance, served, carved, and waited on grotesquely, the carver sitting on the end of a trunk.

I had secured a berth in a stifling den at the stern, intended for four persons, but six adults, two boys, and an infant occupied it, and the floor, benches, and luggage in the saloon were covered with people seasick or asleep from the heat, as no ports could be opened. At daylight a gale sprang up, and some hen-coops and other things went overboard. As each wave struck the steamer a chorus of outcries proceeded from the ladies, but we were not long in rough water, but on one great broken surge were carried over the bar, and deposited in the (so-called) harbour of Warrnambool. With true Victorian energy, great works for deepening and improving this port were begun in 1876. In three years substantial piers will be completed, and two powerful steamers have already left the Clyde to meet the requirements of the increasing traffic.

All that was to be seen from the deck was an inlet, margined by low sand-hills, which were being blown away in drifts; a scraggy wooden jetty, the roofs of a few frame-houses, and an opening to the sea, filled up by great walls of surf coming in one behind the other. The wind was tremendous. As in the West Highlands, passengers, goods, horse and carriage, were packed promiscuously into a lighter; some of the former in the condition which might be expected to result from a day and night of "noblerising," and I was glad when a smart boat belonging to the Customs came off for me, with the welcome news that Mr. Hale was on the jetty, and shortly I was heartily welcomed by a bronzed, bearded man, over six feet high, strikingly handsome, and a grand specimen of an Australian gentleman, whose voice alone reminded me of the old days in the far-off English rectory. He had brought his waggon thirty-five miles to meet me, but this, he said, "was nothing in Australia." We breakfasted by a cheerful fire in a clean, bare inn in the main street of Warrnambool, which, however, seemed to be composed only of a main street of staring frame-houses, on both sides of a wide, windy, sandy, empty road, monopolised that morning by some ill-bred dogs, whose ears, noses, and slouching gait suggested dingo blood. The town, from its aspect, might have been supposed to be obsolete, and asleep with old age; but it is a youth of twenty-two, and wakes up at times to do a very large trade, for it is the outlet of a rich agricultural country, known as the Western District. The inn stable, with its double row of stalls, high roof, and broad drive in the middle, looked the largest building in Warrnambool.

The waggon was a covered one, of American

pattern, a shallow wooden tray, on which were fixed three seats, one behind the other. The wheels of such waggons are very high, with very narrow tires, and the strong springs, rendered necessary by the bush roads, require a considerable weight on them to make the vehicle easy. The horses, a very handsome pair, were harnessed, as is usual in the colony, very far from their work. A man held the head of each, and, on letting them go, both animals reared, shook themselves, and went off at a full gallop, coerced into a succession of jumps before they settled down into a furious trot. They travelled thirty-five miles in four hours, inclusive of two stoppages of twenty minutes each, and galloped up a grassy hill at last without having turned a hair! The pair, which could be bought in the Western District for £30, would fetch £200 in London. They were neither stabled nor groomed, as we understand grooming, yet their coats were fine and glossy. When wanted, they were driven in from the rich clover pastures, and the dust brushed out of them, and their performances, both in the saddle and in harness, were admirable. The cheapness of horses, and the ease with which they are kept, are among the many advantages of "up country" life in the colony.

NAVAL CRESTS AND BADGES.

HER Majesty's ship *Termagant* has been commissioned at Portsmouth, and it is the business of her officers to see that, in the performance of her duty, she acts up to her name. That duty implies the maintenance of the honour of the British flag and the support of all that is symbolised by it. Guided as she will be by men trained in the traditions of Nelson, it may confidently be anticipated that she will do her duty well, and prove the *termagant* she professes to be, should enemies threaten.

Very early in the commission her officers have to settle in their own minds what their notion of a *termagant* frigate is, and to express that notion by art. What shall the ship's crest be? What device shall be ordered of Mr. Griffin, to be stamped on the officers' paper and envelopes? These are among the earliest questions which perplex and divide the Mess Committee whilst the *Termagant* is fitting out. Guns, shot, and shell will come from the gun-wharf as a matter of course; the dockyard authorities will make sure that the ship's proper complement of stores will be provided; even the table and kitchen gear for the mess will come according to regulation; but the provision of creature comforts, and the ordering of those social arrangements upon which the comfort of a mess so much depends, remain for the committee. Upon questions like the supply of wines, of books, of newspapers, and of periodicals (the "Leisure Hour" being of course always included), sub-committees of the mess members can decide; but the question of the crest is reserved for a committee of the whole house.

If all agreed as to the commissariat, or in the selection of the books, of the newspapers, away would go at a breath one of the most cherished privileges of an officers' mess. Where would be the right now vested in all who are not members of sub-committees to complain of the claret or sherry, or of "this stupid book," of this "idiotic newspaper," chosen by a committee of which complainant was

not a member? The thing is not to be thought of; it would give a dead level of content, and deprive individual members of the pastime of "hunting the committee." The crest question is felt to be one which concerns the officers as a whole. The ship's honour, not their comfort, is involved, and about the ship's honour they will have no trifling. Is the *Termagant* to be represented as a vulgar scold, or is she to represent during the three or more years of her commission only an armed terror to the foe? Are the invitation cards to repel by exhibiting the head of a "Fury," or to attract by showing an angry, but virtuous wife, showing fight to the world in defence of a weaker vessel—her husband? These are nice questions upon which all manner of opinions may be expressed, and, as they affect all, it is but right that all should be consulted. Many and grave are the deliberations on these points.

One officer proposes to adopt the ship's figure-head for her crest. Another votes the suggestion barbarous, and savouring too much of "shop." A third offers the photograph of the prudent *mère de famille*, who, overruling her husband's good-natured weakness, refused to let him marry her daughter on nothing a year. A fourth proposes to advertise for ladies who think themselves eligible to sit as models to the artist designing the *Termagant*. Offers No. 3 and No. 4 are rejected at once; and then arises a long and animated controversy whether the *Termagant*, no matter who sits for the portrait, shall be classically depicted, or shall wear the guise of a modern. The youngest lieutenant, who was engaged only a few days back, and who can think of woman only through the ideal which fills his mind, advances the theory that *termagants*, being creatures of the past, and having no place in modern history, should be decked in at least Roman drapery. This position is contested and ridiculed by the commander, on the ground that he saw a living and very active *termagant* no later than yesterday in the High Street. The surgeon has his say, the chaplain his, and finally it is resolved that the subaltern officer of Marines, who is so famous for his sketches, and has an artistic renown, which has followed him from the barracks to the ship, shall be asked to submit three or four designs for the consideration of his brother officers.

The subaltern, being an amiable as well as an artistic man, modestly, and with many protestations of inability, accepts the office. At the adjourned meeting of the committee, his No. 1 design is universally approved, and Mr. Griffin gets orders to cut and carve a die which shall stamp upon the mess paper and envelopes the subaltern's conception of what a *termagant* is.

The writer is sorry to be unable, after so much said on the subject, to show in the annexed sheet a portrait of the *Termagant*. He has, however, described pretty accurately the sort of process, and the kind of tribunal through and before which these grave points pass on all occasions of the commissioning of a ship. Sometimes it happens that a mess is not so fortunate as to possess an artist among its members. In such cases, if the suggestions offered, but not embodied in a sketch, should not be adopted, recourse is had to Mr. Griffin, of the Hard, Portsea, by whose courtesy we are enabled to publish the annexed designs.

The figure-head is often an excellent prompter. Designed as it has been by heads accustomed to such work, and carved under the supervision of men who



CRESTS OF SHIPS OF HER MAJESTY'S NAVY.

know that no travesty or ridiculous object will be accepted by the authorities, it often furnishes out of hand a model which cannot be improved. Where Stags, and Plovers, and Merlins, and Hawks are in question, this is undoubtedly the case. But the Tribune, Devastation, Retribution, Growler, Hercules, Emerald, Trafalgar, Resistance, and Invincible leave members "fancy free" and at liberty to invent some new thing. Alas! too, for the disestablishment of figure-heads, which the exigencies of modern shipbuilding sometimes require. The gilded prow, with a badge only, which surmounts the stem of some of our finest ships—and in Thunderers and Devastations one may be excused for not even knowing stem from stern—leaves devices to the imagination, for all that figure-heads can suggest.

In the second row of our engravings we see the idea which the Devastations had of their mission at sea. It was clearly to be ready at all times and on all occasions to startle an enemy with a messenger full of the fury of war. Like father, like son, and any of our readers who may have seen the Devastation lying in the massiveness of her strength, and in the perfection of her ugliness, would recognise at a glance the appropriateness of the crest.

The Emerald's figure-head shows an elegant young woman crowned with a circlet of jewels, in which green stones are most prominent; but it pleased the officers, especially those from the Green Isle, to be represented (fig. 2, row 4) by the harp of Erin.

Captain Nares and his brave comrades in the Alert and Discovery seem to have resolved to club together in devices as in everything else. One crest for the two ships is typical enough of the unity of spirit which animated the crews at parting, and which continued, let it be hoped, till they returned in safety. The device itself goes far beyond anything that figure-heads, or wooden-heads of any kind, could have suggested. In the front of our first row we see the two exploring ships bearing down straight on Father Neptune, who, no way terrified by an apparition so strange in that quarter of his dominions, takes up a position on the very top of the North Pole, and points his untrident hand to the north star, standing out sadly by itself above the Pointers. It is clear from the design that the explorers believed in an open Polar Sea around the Pole, and that there, as much as in crossing the line, they expected Father Neptune to come on board.

The rigid figure of the Iron Duke, with which Londoners are so familiar, and which can be seen from so many points looking down from its eminence near Apsley House, commended itself more to the officers of the Duke of Wellington than the admirably-carved bust of the great warrior which is conspicuous on the bow of the Portsmouth flagship.

Victory is fitly recalled to sailors' minds by Nelson's ever-memorable signal, "England expects every man will do his duty," rather than by any amount of crowned ladies with swords in their hands and wreaths about their brows. And so wreaths and the signal entwine around the ideal crown on the crest. But why should the Trafalgar herself, which cherishes the signal as her motto, be typified by two ships blazing at each other? Surely this was a case where the subaltern with an artistic turn of mind was not called into council, and where we suspect

Mr. Griffin was not consulted. The unmistakable head and face of the Hero of Trafalgar should here, if anywhere, have been seen. In this the figure-head men had the advantage.

Resistance, one would think, might be as aptly represented by a modern blue-jacket as by a mediæval knight; and the Briton, as depicted in the last sketch of our engraving, gives rise to the reflection that the nationality has "struck home" many times since woad-stained savages brained strangers with their clubs after the manner shown. But what could be more apt than the Growler's image, which seems just about to "give tongue," and perhaps a trifle more, to those who would interfere with him? The Valorous is well represented by a seaman nailing the colours to the mast, whilst Sirius (the dog-star) stands confessed in a star enclosing a portrait of its supposed owner and inhabitant (though also not unlike "Toby" with his frill).

The Challenger, a name which has given rise to many inventions in the way of crests, could not be better represented than by the crowing bantam; and what could better tell of the speed and endurance of the Swiftsure than the hart which stands—apparently on hot coals, by the way—above the name of the ship?

The Invincible's motto is more to be commended than the device, and we cannot but think the Repulse might have done better, except it is intended that an enemy might as well knock his head against a stone wall. But it is clear, according to the fitness of things, that Britannia shall present the well-known form which is stamped on penny-pieces, and that the Sultan shall stand out under a crescent, with his name on a couple of twisted Turkish bonds.

Alas, poor Sappho! This is all we can say as we look upon that unfortunate young poetess, taking such a fearful "header" from such a high rock. What chance is there of the ship in the distance coming up in time to save her? Where is the Boyton or the Webb to support her till assistance can arrive? The designers of this device must have intended a continuous warning against the folly of not learning to swim, and of the impropriety of taking leaps from what may be called the Height of Imprudence.

The Gnat, the Rifleman, and the Racer are recognised at sight, and so is the Cossack. The spelling of the Cameleon is that of the engraver, not of the ship or artist, it is right to say. But the Bohemian king's feathers adopted by the Black Prince would as fitly represent the last Prince of Wales as the first; and the Torch might, perhaps, have adopted Cupid's flame in preference to a brace of funeral torches. But these are all matters of opinion, upon which, fortunately, the freest expression is allowed, and it is by no means certain that in the conclave of assembled officers the suggestions here offered would find acceptance. Such as they are, however, they are submitted to the judgment of readers who are not wanting in sympathy with all that concerns our naval friends.

One thing is certain, viz., that whatever the device, there are few of our readers who would not willingly receive a card of invitation headed with it; and should they accept—as undoubtedly they should—they will find nowhere a more hearty or more genuine welcome than on board the British man-of-war which has invited them.

F. W. R.

THE GREAT SMITH FAMILY: LINEAL AND COLLATERAL.

BY EDWIN PAXTON HOOD.

IV.

TO stand in a blacksmith's shop, as we said at the commencement of these papers—a blacksmith's shop of the old type, on the corner of the village green—while the sparks from the hot iron were flying about, used to test the courage of childhood; but to step into the great modern moulding-room, or to visit such works as some of those in Sheffield or in Derbyshire, almost at first tests the courage of a man, unless his nerves are themselves tolerably steel-textured. To become acquainted with the power of the blast-furnace, that invention which became necessary when the condensed heat of coal superseded the slighter and more diffused strength of charcoal or wood fuel; to visit the oreus, where the amazing quiet, white heat is exercising its tremendous energies; to see buckets or hogsheds of liquid iron poured out like water, borne on the shoulders of men, or lifted by huge cranes, and bidden to flow in those moulds which had been prepared over the floor of the huge shed; or to go into some other department of the same works, and to see the huge hammer, like some mighty iron elephant, at its work; or, in the same shed, some vast bar of flaming iron brought forth from the furnace, while round it stand the stalwart smiths—a ring of them, each with his mighty hammer, laying on with swift and sweeping blows, all keeping a perfect harmony, the slightest interference with which might be fatal to somebody's arm or head: all this gives a very different idea of the smith from that we have been wont to associate with the old blacksmith's shop. And such a variety of pieces of labour are all pursuing their steady course to some end at the same time, and all apparently so unrelated to each other. Visiting, for instance, one of the great works of one of our larger agricultural instrument makers, it is a curious thing to stand before some smaller furnace and anvil, and to mark the rapidity with which a couple of men are engaged in melting the iron, cutting and throwing off those essential little things called *nuts*; or, passing along some quieter gallery, bearing no trace of furnace or forge at all, but where, directed by the cunning hand, the remote furnace keeps all in operation unseen, some amazing knife or bore pursues its way, cutting with exquisite beauty, planing with polishing completeness, the ironwork, whatever it may be, and fitting it to take its place in the great machine. Like a watch, one of these vast machines—the steam-plough or the threshing-machine—is a wonderful illustration of the division of labour. The workman goes on, performs his part, or makes his piece, it may be almost in ignorance, or in entire ignorance, of the part which it is to play in the great work for which it is designed.

Of old, almost the chief idea which many people associated with the smith was that of a farrier, the man who shod horses. But how different now, since iron has become steel, and both fulfilling that which has so often been said, that iron forms the true foundation of all advanced civilisation! Some time since Mr. Gladstone said: "There is a race between nations in industry and enterprise, and there can be no doubt which nation is foremost in the race

—it is the United Kingdom. The external commerce of this country is as great as the commerce of France and America combined, the two countries which come next—that is, with our thirty millions of population we have as great a commerce as France and America with their seventy millions of population." And for this we are indebted chiefly to the family of the Smiths, turn wherever we will, whether to the immense engines, the iron horses which carry our commerce over land and sea, to the iron rails upon which one speeds along, or to the paddles and screws which are as wings to the other, or to the great factories where the necessities and comforts of life are produced with such speed and rapidity; all may be said to result from the power of the smith. It was a smith himself—Ebenezer Elliot, the blacksmith-poet—who many years since, before all the triumphs to which we have referred were achieved, prophesied:—

"Fire-kindling man, how weak wast thou
Ere thou hadst conquered fire!
How like a worm on mountain's brow
Thou shrankst from winter's ire;
Or heardst the torrent-gathering night
Awake the wolf, with thee to fight,
Where these broad shades aspire.

But lo! the train! on, onward! still,
Loud shrieks the kindled wave;
And back fly hamlet, tree, and hill,
White steam and banners brave;
And thoughts on vapouring wings are hurled,
To shake old thrones, and change a world,
And dig Abaddon's grave.

For mind shall conquer time and space,
Bid east and west shake hands,
Bring over ocean, face to face,
Earth's ocean-severed strands;
And on her iron road will bear
Words that shall wither in despair
The tyrants of all lands."

Many years since Lord Brougham, in a great speech upon the occasion of laying the foundation-stone of the Mechanics' Institution in Liverpool, not long after the opening of the line of railway between Liverpool and Manchester, referred to the astonishing impressions produced upon his mind while traversing that line. The amazing conquests since that time have scarcely transcended the impressions he described. "I saw," he says, "the difficulties of time and space overcome; I beheld a kind of miracle exhibited before my astonished eyes; I surveyed mosses pierced through on which it was before hardly possible for man or beast to plant the sole of the foot, and now covered with a road and bearing heavy waggons, laden not only with innumerable passengers, but with merchandise of the largest bulk and weight; I saw valleys made practicable by bridges of ample height and length which spanned them; saw the steam railway traversing the surface of the water at a distance of sixty or seventy feet in perpendicular height; saw the rocks excavated, and the gigantic power of man penetrating through miles of the solid

mass, and gaining a great, a lasting, an almost perennial conquest over the powers of nature by his skill and industry and the courage which he had shown in setting himself against the obstacles which matter had opposed to his course." In this vivid grouping the great speaker gathered up, for the purpose of showing the benevolent conquests of industry in contrast to the calamities of war, a series of particulars, for every one of which we may be said to be indebted to the powers of the smith.

One of the most ingenious descriptions of the work of the great iron-master occurs in the celebrated poem of Du Bartas, his "Divine Weeks and Works," so admirably translated by Josiah Sylvestre, that he is said to have carried the translation beyond the original. After describing Tubal Cain as "a witty huntsman," first perceiving the scalding metal becoming cold, settling into any shape, then growing so hard that by its sharpened side it will soon divide the firmest substance, he describes how, after heat had, by his invention, done its work,—

"Cold takes them thence : then off the dross he rakes,
And this a hammer, that an anvil makes ;
And adding tongs to these two instruments,
He stores his house with yron implements :
As forks, rakes, hatchets, plough-shares, coulters, staples,
Boltes, hinges, hooks, nails, whiteles, spokes, and grapples ;
And grow'n more cunning, hollow things he formeth,
He hatcheth files, and winding vices wormeth,
He shapeth sheers, and then a saw indents,
Then beats a blade, and then a lock invents.
Happy device ! we might as well want all
The elements, as this hard minérale.
This, to the plough-man, for great uses serves :
This, for the builder, wood and marble carves :
This arms our body against adverse force :
This cloths our backs : this rules th' unruly horse :
This makes us dry-shod daunce in Neptune's Hall :
This brightens gold : this conquers self and all :
Fifth element, of instruments the haft,
The tool of tools, and hand of handy-craft."

The smith takes a high rank among the artists of the Middle Ages. The iron-master was not so inferior a workman in society as, perhaps, he seems to us. Some contempt has been cast upon our Thomas Cromwell, the Earl of Essex—and to whose family, Thomas Carlyle says, the family of the great Protector was certainly related—because he was the son of a blacksmith of Putney. This was probably the case, and the blacksmith's son earned for himself, pleasantly or unpleasantly, the designation from Thomas Fuller, the title of *Malleus Monachorum*—the hammer of the monasteries. "The Putney Blacksmith," says Mr. Thomas Carlyle, "father of the *Malleus*, or Hammer that smote monasteries on the head, a figure worthy to take his place beside Hephaistos or Smith Mimer, was probably a Fen-countryman—one of the junior branches—who came to live by metallurgy here. His kinsman, Richard," continues Carlyle, "was fated also to produce another *Malleus*—Cromwell, who smote a thing or two!"

But, for the most part, we are to look for the great smiths, not among the great political actors or renowned world-shakers. Some of those who appeared in the Middle Ages have left behind them singular pieces of beautiful work, so beautiful that, perhaps, even with our amazing improvements in machinery, and the art of wrestling with the hard iron, they constitute a kind of wonder and despair. Some of

the good blades of the Middle Ages have long been a kind of mystery. The Ferrara blade, for instance, since the keenest search has been quite unable to discover any such workmen as Andrea Ferrara. A writer in the "Notes and Queries" suggests what is exceedingly probable, that it is not the name of a person at all, but, as the inscription shines on the fine sharp blade, it is simply an abbreviation of *Ferra rara*, that is, choice blades. The Solingen blade attained a fame as remarkable, and furnishes one of the traditions and legends of the Rhine. Peter Simmelpass was the first inventor of Damascus blades in Germany, and these were so famous that, as was the wont of that time, the discovery of the art of their formation had to be associated with the victories of love and the powers of darkness, and the legend holds its place among the other wonders of the Rhine to this day. Among these beautiful pieces of wrought-iron of the Middle Ages is the shrine of St. Sibald, or St. Sibaldus, in Nuremberg, the work of Peter Vischer, who was born in 1460 and died in 1529. He was assisted in the casting of this famous piece of work by his five sons; he employed upon it thirteen years of labour; it was finished in 1519. But there it is to this day, the wonder of all artists competent to express an opinion upon its merits. The statue of the great smith himself also stands in the same church, but in a mason's dress, with apron on and chisel in hand. Lord Lindsay, that great art critic, describes at length, and with enthusiasm, the rich piece of Gothic architecture, cast entirely of bronze—speaks of the statues of the twelve Apostles, full of dignity and expression, so calm and quiet, with their flowing drapery; and, he says, "their varied action and force of expression in the countenance deserve the highest praise." Tradition tells us that Vischer was miserably paid for this, his immortal work; and an inscription on the monument says that he did it "to the praise of God Almighty alone, and by the aid of pious persons, paid by their voluntary contributions."

The mention of the name of Vischer will call to the memory that of Benvenuto Cellini, whose story is told in one of the most entertaining pieces of autobiography ever penned. He was a great smith; his figure of Perseus at Florence is one of the wonders of the world. The life of this blacksmith—silversmith—goldsmith—is full of the most amazing adventures; and hair-breadth escapes and imprisonments, assassinations and robberies, ghosts and dreams, line its way—a strange picture of that depraved moral society in which he lived, when murder and assassination walked about the streets in the gayest attire, and with the most jaunty manners. Cellini rose to work for popes and princes, and touched by his subtle finger the most obdurate metals into marvellous grace and beauty. The story of his Perseus, which was wrought for the Grand Duke of Florence, is a singular instance of the way in which genius is paid, or rather left unpaid, by its patrons. The sum he was to receive for his great work was inconsiderable indeed compared with that immortality which has been conferred upon it; but the difficulties he experienced in getting any money at all from the duke constitute a curious commentary. While the poor artist was struggling with his achievement, and really praying to God most fervently that it might be a success, and praising him for every little indication that looked like success, and while he was to receive but some three thousand crowns for his work, the duke would send him away with some poor in-

stalment, or tell him that he was unable to pay him because he had given twenty-five thousand crowns for a diamond. The poor smith's story illustrates very much the history of genius in such transactions in all ages. The duke could not pay him his three thousand crowns for his Perseus, which through all future years was to add another attraction to the city, and call tens of thousands of pilgrims to gaze upon its matchless grace and the fair proportions which had struggled into beauty beneath the artist's skill, but was constantly sending for poor Cellini to ask his opinion of the value of this or that jewel which he had either bought or intended to buy for the decoration of his own person, while he was leaving his poor artist unpaid, and, in fact, paid he never appears to have been. Posterity has paid him with its praise. Perhaps the duke foresaw that this would be the case, and he does not appear to have troubled himself much about the matter.

One of the prettiest stories of these smiths of the Middle Ages is the well-known one of Quentin Matsys, the great artist called by pre-eminence "The Blacksmith of Antwerp," who made himself an artist from his love to his master's daughter. The story has ever since been a theme for novelists and poets; and on the monument to Quentin Matsys outside of Antwerp Cathedral there may still be read the inscription, "*Connubialis amor de Mulcibre fecit Apellem*"—Connubial love made an Apelles of a Mulciber,—that is, a painter of a blacksmith. The master had sneered at the idea of one of Quentin's inferior craft winning his daughter, but had promised that if he could make himself a worthy artist he should win the lady; and the story is well known how he travelled and studied, and at last returned to win the prize for which he had toiled, and to obtain, by-and-by, so high a rank that he far outstripped the works of his master, whose name is lost in oblivion. Our readers have seen some of his pieces, especially the famous picture of the "Misers,"—the original in Windsor Castle, engravings of it all over Europe; while outside of Antwerp Cathedral is another piece of work, in iron, the flexible and ornamental foliations of which win the admiration of all spectators, but show what an equal master he was alike of the hammer and the forge, the pencil and the palette. The great blacksmith and artist was born in Antwerp in 1450, and died in honour there in 1529.

Quentin Matsys was not a gold- but an iron-smith; but the mention of his name suggests the more luxurious and ornamental relations of the smith's labour, and surely among such George Heriot must not go unmentioned. Every reader of the "Fortunes of Nigel" will remember "Jingling Geordie," the gossip and friend—and an exceedingly useful friend, too—of James I. In the year in which young Heriot commenced business, the trade of a goldsmith in Edinburgh was first distinctly separated from that of hammer-men, or common smiths, and their separate rights were confirmed by charter. The father of George Heriot was also a goldsmith in Edinburgh, but when James I came to London, George followed the king. He died, however, in Edinburgh, and lies in the Grey Friars' Churchyard. He accumulated an immense fortune, and Edinburgh to this day receives the benefit of it in what is called George Heriot's Hospital. It appears to have been a splendid endowment. We are not aware of the number of boys educated in this institution. As the property has increased in value, the number has

grown from time to time. Most of the boys are apprenticed out to trades, and are allowed ten pounds sterling for five years, being equal to an apprentice fee of fifty pounds; and at the end of their apprenticeship, if they have conducted themselves well, they receive five pounds for the purchase of a new suit of clothes. It is said that no institution can boast of having reared a greater number of useful and respectable members of society than Heriot's Hospital, and some of them have added to the value of the foundation by large donations and legacies. The surplus funds are now spreading good education far beyond the limits of the Hospital.

There are insignificant things belonging to the Smith family which yet testify to their importance and power. A nail is a very insignificant thing; we do not mean those vast wedges, those huge iron nails, which are driven red-hot into the red-hot sheet of iron to weld it and prove it, but those small nails, which hold the shelves in our households, and almost all the things in our house, together. What is it that is not held together by a nail? They are the pieces of society; they are the small stitches of civilisation. A beautiful French writer says, in her charming journal, published long years after the writer's death: "Louise tells me that I can find much to say where others could see nothing at all. 'Look,' she said, 'you could say a hundred things about this'—the latch of the door that she was lifting on going away. Assuredly one would have a good deal to say and think about that bit of iron that so many hands have touched; which has been raised with so many different emotions, under so many glances, so many men, days, and years; oh, the history of a latch would be a long one indeed!" And as the smiths have their more insignificant objects of labour, so also, among them, there are those who perhaps may be regarded as the more insignificant workers. The tinker to the smith is what the cobbler is to the shoemaker—a character who has not attained any eminence in the symmetry of our social system. Yet there was one eminent worker even in this lowly department, who has left immortal traces behind him. John Bunyan, if tradition tell the truth, was only a humble tinker. Very wonderful it is how ever that man attained to that strength which enabled him to perform a work which combines something of the genius of Shakespeare in setting to the music of his imagination the creed of Calvin; and he testifies that he never had, but seems to imply that he never read, more than four books in his life; but the tinker in his solitary gaol at Bedford wrote such a work that the poor Puritan received the homage of the High Church writer, Dr. Southey, in one of the most graceful and compendious of biographies; the glowing eulogium of the Prince of Essayists, Lord Macaulay; the tender and musical appreciation of the sympathetic muse of William Cowper; the contributions of the canvases of innumerable artists, and countless crowds of engravers; besides that altogether unparalleled fame which has not only made his book the favourite, for many ages, of childhood and youth, but the comfort and recreation of old age. Not a bad contribution from one of the most insignificant branches of the great Smith family.

But, indeed, tinkers have been a rather interesting people, though their way in life has been so lowly as to have excited little attention and regard. The entertaining author of those pleasant volumes on the forgotten and unnoticed things of old London, called

"London Scenes and London People," gives a remarkable account of a friend he picked up in Peter Waghorn, the tinman of Holywell Mount, who must have been a remarkable man. He manufactured candlesticks and nutmeg-graters, children's tin mugs, tobacco-boxes, and similar articles; he was remarkably fair in all his dealings, carefully examining every article before he sold it, and not allowing any thing to leave his hands with the slightest defect. But Peter was the son of a clergyman, and had received something of an University education; but he formed an attachment to a girl greatly inferior to himself in the social scale, in opposition to parental law, and being cut off from all parental boons and blessings, and having no means of subsistence, he apprenticed himself to a tinsmith, and just when he was settling into a little enviable home, his young wife, for whom he had sacrificed everything, was snatched away from him by death, and he sunk into a moody, misanthropic man; but living on, and keeping his little shop of all sorts of odds and ends in solitary and yet uncomplaining despair. By-and-by he became a devout man: still, in a quiet, solitary, unknown, and unheeded sort of way, he read his Greek Testament and the Latin Vulgate, and kept a few other books of the strong old thoughtful order by him in his little lumber-filled house. As he had neither wife nor child, he took to animals, and prosecuted his work of soldering his tins with a faithful cat often sitting on his shoulder the while, and a Newfoundland dog, his constant companion, looking unutterable things in that friendly, companionable way in which dogs can look, while the work was going on. He was very industrious, and worked at all hours; his hammer was to be heard at early dawn, and seldom ceased until late in the evening. "I am afraid to be idle," he used to say; "thoughts crowd upon me when the hammer is laid by; dreary fancies terrify me, and sorrows come newly freshened and sharpened. Yes, I might read, but I find griefs come out of books: I am never so free as when I am actually at work." The writer who has immortalised him, lost sight of him, and when visiting the spot again, found he was dead. He was much honoured by his neighbours, but he sought no acquaintance, and seems to have permitted none, or but few. He never entered a public-house, and seemed to deny himself the smallest indulgence. A keen-eyed search would not discover Holywell Mount now, and the place on which the old tinsmith's house stood appears to be occupied by a flaunting gin-palace. Here is a little glimpse of an obscure life in the short and simple annals of the poor.

There is a well-known volume, the story of one who was familiarly called Sammy Hick. He was a religious oddity. The volume in which his memory is preserved is called "The Village Blacksmith." There have been many village blacksmiths who have deserved a biography, notably Isaac Wilkinson. Nearly a hundred years have gone by since this sagacious man prophesied, in the birthday of steam-power, its future triumphs. His story is a very short one, and what is known of him is to be found in an old history of Birmingham. "I worked," said he, "at a forge in the north. My masters gave me twelve shillings a week,—I was content; they raised me to fourteen shillings,—I did not ask them for it; they went on to sixteen and eighteen shillings,—I never asked them for the advances; they gave me a guinea a-week,—I said to myself, 'If I am worth a

guinea a-week to you, I am worth more to myself; I left them." He first brought into action the steam-engine blast at his works near Wrexham. "I grew tired of my leathern bellows," said he, in his old age, to a young friend; "I determined to make iron ones; I did it. Everybody laughed at me, and when I succeeded they all cried out, 'Who could have thought it!'" And it was to the same gentleman to whom he made these remarks that he said, in 1779, "You will live to see waggons drawn by steam. I would have made such a waggon for myself if I had had time." Isaac Wilkinson is especially remarkable, for he approached the verge of an immense discovery; he distilled coals in order to extract the tar without being aware that the gas might be detained and turned to immense uses. His son, John Wilkinson, carried forward his father's ideas. They both became rich and famous men. They were the only people able to execute, in that day, the first castings of Messrs. Boulton and Watt. John Wilkinson died in 1808, at the age of eighty years. He rests in an excavation in a rock on what was his own estate, Castlehead, Westmoreland. A tablet of cast-iron marks the spot of his interment, and his body lies, by his direction, in a cast-iron coffin. An odd blacksmith he!

In the family of the Smiths, "the learned blacksmith"—as he has everywhere been called—Elihu Burritt, has achieved a world-wide fame. He is a well-known American, who, while working at the forge, began to study with no higher ambition than to manage a surveyor's compass, and to read Virgil in Latin; but from Latin he passed on to French, from French to Spanish, and then he took to Greek. He procured a Greek grammar, a little book which would just lie in his straw hat, and which he carried with him to his work, which was the casting of brass cow-bells in a couple of furnaces which he had to watch with no small attention; but while standing over these, and waiting for the fining of the metal, he would take out his little book and commit part of a Greek verb to memory. Then, afterwards, in another shop, he tells us how, rising at half-past four in the morning, he studied German until breakfast-time, alternating this study with that of Greek—how, in the shop, while the other men had gone to their dinner, he sat down to Homer's Iliad without note or comment to assist him, but with a Greek and Latin lexicon; then, how these were put away, and a few moments snatched before these men came back, to read a little piece of Italian, because the book was less likely to attract the attention of the noisy men who thronged the room. He says he "determined to read the Iliad without a master. The proudest moment," he says, "of my life was when I first possessed myself of the full meaning of the first fifteen lines of that noble work. I took a triumphal walk in celebration of that exploit; in the evening I read in the Spanish language until bed-time. I followed this course for three months, at the end of which time I read about the whole of the Iliad in Greek and made considerable progress in French, Italian, German, and Spanish." He had now fairly whetted his appetite for languages and the lore which they contain, so he determined to plunge into the Oriental dialects and the Icelandic Sagas. But America was not so well supplied with books then of the order he wanted as it is now, and as the period of his apprenticeship was out, he indulged the dream of coming to Europe, and, as he was perfectly moneyless, working

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his passage over and getting employment, when he arrived, in some one of our cities where the stores of a learned library might be opened to him. He started from home with this dream upon his mind, but was compelled to stop short at Worcester in the United States, and pursue his work as blacksmith for twelve dollars a month. He found at Worcester, however, what he wanted—a good antiquarian library; and here, unassisted, he was able, while pursuing his labours at the anvil, to master the tough Hebrew lore.

This Titan of scholarship was at the same time pursuing a variety of other intellectual occupations. The following is the journal of a week's work, given by him to Mary Howitt, in answer to a request she made that he would assist her in contributing some few materials to show the method he pursued in his studies:—

"Monday, June 18th.—Headache; forty pages Cuvier's 'Theory of the Earth,' sixty-four pages French; eleven hours forging.

"Tuesday.—Sixty-five lines Hebrew, thirty pages French, ten pages Cuvier's 'Theory,' eight lines Syriac, ten ditto Danish, ten ditto Bohemian, nine ditto Polish, fifteen names of stars; ten hours forging.

"Wednesday.—Twenty-five lines Hebrew, fifty pages astronomy; eleven hours forging.

"Thursday.—Fifty-five lines Hebrew, eight ditto Syriac; eleven hours forging.

"Friday.—Unwell; twelve hours forging.

"Saturday.—Unwell; fifty pages natural history; ten hours forging.

"Sunday.—Lesson for Bible-class."

This is surely an illustration of a student in earnest. He continued his studies into the Turkish, Ethiopic, and Persian languages, and as his knowledge of Icelandic became known, he was requested to translate several of the Icelandic Sagas for American reviews. Generous offers also were made to him, inviting him to lay aside his occupation; but the man was singular, and he testifies that, according to his idea, the condition of a journeyman or apprentice is a state of life most favourable and advantageous to the acquisition of knowledge. He became famous, however, as a mighty polyglotist, and was not less known as a simple and devout believer in Christian truth. His name was first made known to this country, many years since, by an enthusiastic letter from the pen of John Angell James. Subsequently he came here, and he has memorialised his residence in England by three volumes describing his walk with his knapsack from John-o'-Groats to Land's End, and his rambles round the Black Country. The learned blacksmith has a great deal of the rich fancy of the poet, and some of his descriptions of scenery are among the most beautiful in our language; but he has always retained his enthusiasm for his old work, and the present writer has been sometimes amused to hear him describe, in his own sweet, simple, and modest manner, how often, in passing some smith's shop, he has gone in, and, after a little chat, requested to have a blow at the forge and a stroke at the anvil, just for the pleasure of realising the old labour. Surely this is as it should be. Happy is the man who loves his work whatever that work may be!

With this name we close for the present our talk, but shall be glad in some future paper to gather up the proverbs and parables which abound in many

nations, and give an additional and remarkable interest to the family of the Smiths.

WEATHER FORECASTS.

IN a recent lecture delivered at the Royal Institution, Mr. Scott, of the Meteorological Department, described, in a popular and interesting way, the means available to every one of making meteorological forecasts without the use of instruments. Fishermen, gamekeepers, shepherds, and the like, can often, from local signs, guess the weather for their own neighbourhood a day or two ahead. Nay, for a particular district they can do this in many cases better than the scientist with all his apparatus. Savages are wonderful weather-prophets, in like manner, within a certain range. The lecturer cited a letter to himself from the late Commodore Goodenough, saying that when on board the *Pearl* in the Pacific, he fell in with some fugitive slaves from Samoa, who, without instruments of any kind, had navigated a canoe 1,180 miles by sheer dint of what the commodore called such a knowledge of weather signs as must have been tantamount to a sixth sense. They all knew the proverb that pigs can see the wind, and their carrying about straw against bad weather had often been spoken of as a prognostic.

Birds of passage, also, seeking refuge from colder regions in warmer ones, afforded useful indications of the character of the coming season. This was particularly so with such birds as wild swans and other waterfowl. By coming south they tell us of the sharp winters brewing for us in Russia and Lapland. The great difficulty in dealing with these prognostics and with popular weather-wisdom in general, arises from their being so peculiarly local. One who knows well the signs in one district will be quite at a loss in another. The non-instrumental signs might be divided into those taken from the clouds, from the landscape, and from optical phenomena. Mr. Scott said he purposely omitted those drawn from animals and plants as not being so readily explicable on physical principles.

The clouds were the most valuable signs, for not only did their motion show us which way the wind was blowing above our heads while we were sheltered by hills or buildings, but their changes also in form and size told us of operations going on in the upper strata of the atmosphere, of which we could gain no knowledge in any other way. He was not now speaking of such phenomena as the small cloud "like a man's hand," which in the Mediterranean portended violent thunderstorms, but of more general indications. It was well to be warned that the regular absorption of clouds at certain times of the day was no sign of permanent change of weather. They all knew that the mornings of some of the hottest days in summer were often very foggy, and, conversely, after a wet day we had not uncommonly a clear night, succeeded by a return of clouds and rain next morning. The lecturer entered at length into the *rationale* of these and other phenomena of which he spoke. The "cirrus," however, or mare's-tail clouds, were most important signs of bad weather, although they were not infallible prognostics of a storm in the place where they are seen. Mr. Scott had noticed in the Tyrol that in summer the cirrus often preceded thunderstorms, the fact being

that it showed the presence of wind aloft, but the friction caused by the mountains prevented the current, which broke up the clouds into "cirrus," from attaining the force of a gale below, whilst nevertheless it had power enough to cause collisions in the strata above and to produce electrical discharges. The filmy network gradually becomes denser and denser, turning into what is called the "cirro-stratus" cloud—a form with which we sometimes see halos round the sun and moon invested—and finally into the "nimbus," or rain cloud. We all knew that small fragments of cloud scudding below widespread cloud-sheets or heavy woolpacks are unfailing signs of storm, while the woolpack cloud itself was a sure indication of great cold in the region above it. This was most characteristically shown in the showery, sleety weather of March, with north-west winds. He might here remark on a very peculiar appearance of cumulus, with its rugged surface below instead of above. This is known as the "pocky" cloud, and is recognised in the Orkneys as the sure precursor of a heavy gale, a relation easily intelligible on the idea that the rounded form of the woolpack is due to the introduction of a mass of condensed vapour into a very cold atmosphere, and that in the case of the pocky cloud there is a moist layer above seeking to force an entrance into a much colder stratum below. Once this entrance gained, sudden condensation follows, and that disturbance gives rise to a gale.

The weather signs taken from the landscape were next enumerated and discussed, such as its being hazy or clear, and the appearance of a cap of cloud on a hilltop, the value of which latter prognostic was proved to vary with circumstances. A cap on a hill was not a sure sign of rain, but the true rule is that caps on low hills are a bad sign, while caps on higher mountains are not so. The observations of Professor Piazza Smyth on Teneriffe, and of others on Chimborazo, etc., were cited in proof of this rectification of the old saw.

Optical signs of the weather, to which the lecturer now passed, mostly concerned the condition or amount of aqueous vapour in the air. The colour of the sky, one of the most trustworthy prognostics, was regulated entirely by the state of condensation of the suspended watery vapour. The successive layers of air charged with vapour stop the different rays of light; firstly the blue, then the yellow, and lastly the red. When the sun is near the horizon the rays have to traverse a great thickness of vapour, and so the last rays at sunset and the first at sunrise are red. The truth of the old rhyme, "Evening red and morning grey," etc., may be thus explained. The disappearance of clouds at sunset is a sign of fine weather, for it is due to the sinking of the clouds into the warmer strata near the surface of the earth, where they are evaporated. These clouds in disappearing leave behind them a large amount of vapour in the air, and the sun's rays shine red through this medium. In the morning the air is comparatively dry after the cold of the night, and the blue and yellow rays are not stopped in their transit, so that the clouds look grey from a diffused light. Conversely, a grey sky in the evening is caused by the presence of such a mass of clouds as to stop the sun's direct rays, and to allow nothing but diffused light to pass; while in the morning the red and lowering tints of the clouds show that the air is full of watery vapour close to its point of condensation.

Varieties.

CHARLES KINGSLEY ON THE JEWS.—In the "Life and Correspondence of the Rev. Charles Kingsley" there is an interesting letter on the subject of the Jews. In a letter to the Rev. Adolph Saphir, he says he has a deep love for the nation, "because I believe, as firmly as any modern interpreter of prophecy, that you are still the nation, and that you have a glorious, as I think, a culminating, part to play in the history of the race. Moreover, I owe all I have ever said or thought about Christianity, as the idea which is to redeem and leaven all human life, secular as well as religious, to the study of the Old Testament, without which the New is to me unintelligible, and I cannot love the Hebrew books without loving the men who wrote them."

WASTRELS.—Miss Maria S. Rye continues her good work in saving destitute and deserted children, and preparing them for emigration to Canada. An attempt was made last year to throw discredit on Miss Rye's work, a (Roman Catholic) commissioner, himself impartial, but open to hostile hints, having reported some disparaging statements from the priests and others. The Canadian Parliament took notice of these statements, and expressed renewed confidence in Miss Rye's work, and it has been asserted without contradiction that nineteen-twentieths of the children have done well. From the Home, at Avenue House, High Street, Peckham, Miss Rye writes:—"Quietly, week by week, and month by month, we have steadily gone on gathering in from here and from there those neglected, forsaken, or destitute little ones known as gutter children, or more lately, as Lord Sandon's wastrels. This ingathering from the street is slow work; we have ignorance and prejudices to combat; but, in spite of these and other obstacles, we still receive here into this Home on an average from one to two children a week, so that between 300 and 400 children have passed through this Home and been placed out in life during the past four years. The term 'wastrels' exactly describes the miserable and unhappy class of children with whom we have to deal. City missionaries bring them to us because they have been found wandering without any home (a whole family of four was so brought a few months ago), because the father is dead and the mother of disreputable or of an uproarious character, threatening to throw herself out of window; in another case the children had, with their father, been wandering about the streets all night, and could only be compared, for weeks after coming to us, to limp rag dolls, falling right or left as placed on their chairs or little stools. Even to-day, not an hour before I began writing this letter, a child seven years was brought in so intoxicated (not the first instance, either) that it took two of us to hold her, and we have had to administer an emetic. Wastrels, indeed! poor little doomed, miserable morsels, bound for the streets and the gaol unless kindly hearts and hands take them away for ever."

ASPARAGUS.—The Jacquesson system of forcing asparagus, adopted at Chalons, consists in placing a common wine-bottle, the bottom of which has been removed, over each head of asparagus as soon as it shows itself above ground. The bottle should be corked loosely before being put in position. Asparagus thus treated not only develops more rapidly than that which has been exposed to the open air, but it is far more tender, so much so that the whole stalk can be eaten, instead of the head only. The exclusion of air preventing the formation of woody, and favouring that of cellular tissue, there is none of the tough fibrous matter which proves so disagreeable when the vegetable is sent to table. The process involves little trouble, and is by no means expensive—old bottles, especially when of certain shapes, being almost valueless in the market. Asparagus grown under bottles is not only good in flavour, it is extremely beautiful to the eye, for the passage of light through the glass communicates to it a light rose tint which is very pleasing.—*Farmer.*

CURFEW.—By some strange blunder it was lately stated in the "Times" that Stratford-on-Avon was the only place where the Curfew bell was now regularly rung. The statement brought letters testifying that the old custom remains in many town and country parishes. We remember it in former years at Leith, and other places in Scotland, which confirms the opinion that it was a custom long before the Norman Conquest. It is a common error to suppose it was first ordained by William the Conqueror, who may, nevertheless, have used the familiar time of the evening bell for his rule as to fire-extinction.